

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ATHENS 00815 261642Z POSS DUPE
ACTION EB-08

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DOTE-00 FMC-01 INR-07 NSAE-00 SAL-01 CG-00 DLOS-06
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R 261555Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8841
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
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USMISSION OECD PARIS
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AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

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E.O. 11652; N/A
TAGS: EWWT, ELTN, ETEL, GR, SY, TU, XF
SUBJECT: GREECE SIGNS AGREEMENT WITH SYRIA FOR FERRY CONNECTION

1. ACCORDING TO INFORMATION RELEASED JANUARY 24 BY GREEK MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, A GREEK DELEGATION HEADED BY AMBASSADOR JOHN GEORGAKIS VISITED DAMASCUS JANUARY 15-23 AND SIGNED AN AGREEMENT FOR REGULAR FERRY SERVICE BETWEEN GREECE AND SYRIA. AGREEMENT IS DESIGNED TO FACILITATE TRADE BETWEEN EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST, USING EXISTING RAIL AND TRUCK ROUTES TO GREECE. FERRY BOATS WILL CARRY BOTH RAILWAY CARS AND MOTOR VEHICLES BETWEEN GREEK PORTS OF THESSALONIKI AND/OR VOLOS AND SYRIAN PORTS OF LATAKIA AND/OR TARTOUS. ACCORDING TO RELEASE, THE GREEK DELEGATION ALSO REACHED PRELIMINARY AGREEMENT FOR A SUBMARINE CABLE BETWEEN GREECE AND SYRIA TO FACILITATE INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS, AND A GREEK-SYRIAN HIGHWAY TRANSPORT AGREEMENT WILL BE SIGNED SHORTLY. A JOINT GREEK-SYRIAN 10-MEMBER COMMITTEE WILL MEET ANNUALLY TO SUPERVISE

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IMPLEMENTATION OF FERRY AGREEMENT.

2. COMMENT: A MEMBER OF GREEK NEGOTIATING TEAM INFORMED EMBOFF JAN 25 THAT THE NEW FERRY AGREEMENT WAS SIGNED WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE APRIL 1976 GREEK-SYRIAN ECONOMIC, CULTURAL AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION AGREEMENT AND IS PART OF A BROADER GREEK GOVERNMENT EFFORT TO UPGRADE ECONOMIC AND TRADE TIES WITH

THE ARAB WORLD. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT STRONG GOG INTEREST IN FERRY AND ROAD TRANSPORT AGREEMENTS WITH SYRIA MAY ALSO REFLECT CONTINUING DIFFICULTIES GREECE HAS ENCOUNTERED WITH ROAD AND RAIL TRANSPORT THROUGH TURKEY. (LATTER WAS SUBJECT OF RECENT PUBLICIZED COMPLAINT BY PIRAEUS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY.) THE INITIAL FERRY AGREEMENT WILL BE FOLLOWED BY MORE DETAILED AGREEMENTS ENCOMPASSING ROAD TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS LINKS. LATTER WILL PROBABLY INCLUDE PROVISION FOR AN EARTH SATELLITE CONNECTION THROUGH CRETE. GREEK EMPHASIS ON TRADE TIES WITH MIDDLE EAST IS REFLECTED IN GROWTH OF GREEK EXPORTS TO MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRIES FROM 765 MILLION DRACHMAS IN 1970 TO 6.6 BILLION BRACHMAS IN 1975. GOG IS CURRENTLY SEEKING NEW ECONOMIC AND TRADE AGREEMENTS WITH OTHER ARAB STATES, AND WE ARE PREPARING EMBASSY ASSESSMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL IMPORTANCE TO GOG OF MIDDLE EASTERN TIES.

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